

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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CALIFORNIA COASTAL CLEANUP DAY

Presented by the California Coastal Commission

Saturday, September 21st, 2002

The California Coastal Commission is proud to announce that the 18th Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day will take place on Saturday, September 21st, from 9 a.m. to noon at over 400 locations throughout the state. Volunteers will clean the debris from all 1,100 miles of the California coast and will also clean the shorelines of many of the bays, creeks, rivers, and lakes that aid in the transfer of trash and debris to the Pacific Ocean.

California Coastal Cleanup Day serves as California's contribution to the International Coastal Cleanup, organized by The Ocean Conservancy (www.oceanconservancy.org). All 50 states and over 100 countries take part in the International Cleanup, making this effort the largest marine-related volunteer event in the world. In addition to collecting trash from the Earth's waterways, volunteers also collect data during the Cleanup, providing important clues as to the nature and source of the trash. Although most people believe that the debris found on beaches is from beachgoers or ocean dumping, data from past cleanups has shown that over 60% of the debris collected on Coastal Cleanup Day originates from inland sources.

"We try to reach as far inland as possible on Coastal Cleanup Day in order to stop trash where it starts," says Eben Schwartz, Statewide Outreach Coordinator for the California Coastal Commission. "When you walk along our city streets, much of the trash you see lying in the gutter is actually marine debris waiting to happen. All those cigarette butts and plastic wrappers that get casually tossed on the ground may one day wind up in some poor bird or marine mammal's stomach."

The effort to stop trash where it starts is especially important when it comes to plastic debris. New research, conducted by the Algalita Marine Research Foundation and the Southern California Coastal Water Research Program, documented an alarming abundance of plastic debris in an area of the open ocean known as the Central Pacific Gyre, as well as in southern California's coastal waters. Surface samples taken throughout the 6,000-square mile Gyre revealed that plastic particles outweigh marine microorganisms by a ratio of 6 to 1 in the upper water column. That is, for every one pound of plankton, there are six pounds of plastic. In a similar study of southern California coastal waters, plastic particles outweighed plankton by a 3 to 1 ratio. Plastic has become part of the marine food chain – it is mistaken for food by marine animals. Research suggests that plastic in the ocean serves as a transport vehicle for PCBs and other toxins, which could be one potential source of PCB contamination found in animals throughout the marine food chain. For example, the Japanese Fisheries Agency recently discovered high levels of PCB concentrations in whale blubber. (Associated Press, 8/9/02.)

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Coastal Cleanup Day is a chance for all Californians to take part in a marine stewardship event. "The Cleanup is an excellent method to spread the message that marine debris is harmful to all of us," says Sara Wan, Chair of the California Coastal Commission. "But mainly it's an opportunity for Californians to join with hundreds of thousands of people all over the world to show their recognition of the important role the ocean plays in the health of the environment and the people and wildlife that depend on it, and to demonstrate our commitment to its stewardship."

California Coastal Cleanup Day is a year-round organizing event that would not be possible without the support of corporate sponsors. Fetzer Vineyards, a first-time supporter of the Coastal Cleanup Day program, will help raise awareness and donate up to \$50,000 for the Coastal Cleanup Day program during August and September through promotions in markets and restaurants throughout the state. "Environmental sustainability is at the core of Fetzer's business practices. Their vineyards are farmed organically and the concepts of sustainability, respect for the land, people, and our collective future is a major part of their mission. By partnering with Fetzer for Coastal Cleanup Day, we hope to be able to hold them up as an example of how corporations can be successful while doing the right thing," says Judi Shils, Marketing Director for the California Coastal Commission.

Volunteers are encouraged to contact the California Coastal Commission in order to sign up for Coastal Cleanup Day 2002. Please contact the Commission at (800) COAST-4U or visit our Web site at www.coastforyou.org.

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